

This week in Congress, after many meetings and lots of discussion, House Democrats unveiled a comprehensive energy bill that will expand domestic drilling offshore and on land; lower prices for consumers and protect taxpayers; expand renewable sources of energy; increase our security by freeing America from the grip of foreign oil; require Big Oil to pay its fair share; end subsidies to Big Oil; and create good-paying jobs. The Comprehensive American Energy Security and Consumer Protection Act is a bill I know I'll support. Here's why: Over the last few weeks, I've travelled across the counties that make up Ohio's Sixth Congressional District. I conducted several roundtable discussions with various industry, business and union leaders. One of the biggest complaints I hear from many people is that their government doesn't listen to them. So, I listened. Over the course of several meetings, I heard about issues surrounding energy, economic development and workforce development. If you think about it, those are the three key areas that represent some of our biggest challenges, but could also present major opportunities for our area if we pass this comprehensive energy bill. I heard from businesses worried about their future because of rising fuel prices. A representative of B&T Trucking, a steel hauler in North Lima, told me the company is using \$30,000 worth of fuel per day and that surcharges can't cover it. It's clear that high gas prices aren't just hurting families. Businesses are hurting too. If they're losing money, they may have to cut staff. Jobs are not something we can afford to lose. Instead, we need to turn this energy crisis into an opportunity for new jobs. It was an idea I heard echoed throughout my sessions. There was a distinct desire on the part of leaders and workers to do more with alternative energy and translate our country's need for it into new jobs. The Democrats comprehensive energy bill does that. Our challenges are great, but I believe the opportunities are even greater for our region to become an energy corridor that not only has plenty of jobs, but supplies our country with the power and resources it needs. We've got the rail, river and willing workforce to pull it together. Over the next week or so, you will hear some nasty debate. I think the choice is clear: support drilling and alternative energy; support small business and working families struggling with energy costs; and support the creation of new jobs. The Republican cry for "drill only" is short sighted. Quite simply, our bill offers more opportunities to drill in more places in America than we've had in a long time and represents a comprehensive energy policy. That's something our country has lacked for a long time. I look forward to continuing to work to make America energy independent and to getting our economy moving again.